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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

June 25, 2012

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The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
The President  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have read with great concern two excerpts from the book "Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan," that were recently published in *The Washington Post*. Both excerpts paint a depressing picture of bureaucratic infighting in the administration that has had a disastrous effect on policy planning in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The second excerpt, published today, makes it clear that Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute, USA (Ret.) was more interested in excluding Richard Holbrooke from policy discussions on Afghanistan and undermining his reputation than determining whether his ideas could have yielded positive results. Ignoring policy suggestions simply because of personal differences prevented the full consideration of all ideas for achieving success in the region. It is especially distressing that this infighting could have been avoided had the Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group (APSG) that I proposed as early as September, 2009, been created. The APSG could have negated this infighting by bringing together a bipartisan panel of experts outside of government to evaluate all possible strategies.

Since you chose not to quash this petty squabbling while it was occurring, I believe the only solution now is to remove Gen. Lute. For a retired senior military officer to allow personal animus toward Richard Holbrooke to cloud his judgment on how to best ensure American success in South Asia is unacceptable, especially when the lives of America service members are on the line.

The recent excerpts printed in *The Washington Post* are just one more in a series of revelations making it clear that your administration has repeatedly politicized national security matters. As my letter of June 7 noted, the *New York Times* reported that David Axelrod, your political advisor and chief campaign strategist, repeatedly attended high-level national security meetings related to terrorist drone strikes when he worked at the White House. The article noted "David Axelrod...began showing up at the 'Terror Tuesday' meetings, his unspeaking presence a visible reminder of what everyone understood: a successful attack would overwhelm the president's other aspirations and achievements."

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This revelation is in keeping with the reporting of Bob Woodward in "Obama's Wars." Woodward indicated that discussions of the war strategy were infused with political calculations. Woodward also wrote of an administration that "wrestled with the most basic questions about the war...What is the mission? What are we trying to do? What will work?"

These are questions that demand answers and could have been taken up by an APSG. But I venture that such a group would not have factored politics into their calculus, nor would they have been hamstrung by bureaucratic infighting and personal disputes. Was that a consideration in your decision to disregard congressional intent as it relates to the APSG?

I have been writing you to establish a review of U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2009. Funding and authority for the creation of the APSG was even included in the FY 2012 Defense Appropriations bill at my request. Such a group would have fostered a long overdue national conversation on the war effort, something which is critically necessary. As my letter dated June 7 also stated, I am concerned that the American public has disengaged from Afghanistan while our service members are still making the ultimate sacrifice.

Stories of the sort outlined above do little to build national confidence in the war effort. As an important first step in restoring confidence, I urge you to ask for Gen. Lute's immediate resignation given the detrimental impact he has had on U.S. objectives in the region.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

FRW:cw